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SUBJECT: ON THE ROAD TO BETTER DRC AND UGANDA RELATIONS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In mid-December 2007, representatives to the 5th Session of the Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) between the governments of Uganda and the DRC met in Kampala to discuss a wide array of issues in their bilateral relationship. On December 27, PolOff and EconOff met with Minister-Counselor Ocana Big Jackson of the Ugandan embassy in Kinshasa to discuss JPC results. If the issues of demarcating the border and sharing oil revenues can be resolved amicably -- and recent developments suggest they can -- a corner will have been turned in Congolese-Ugandan relations. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On December 27, PolOff and EconOff met with Minister-Counselor Ocana Big Jackson at the Ugandan embassy in Kinshasa to discuss the results of the Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) meeting between the governments of Uganda and the DRC in mid-December. A team of experts from both sides comprising the Joint Border Committee is scheduled to meet in Bunia in January 2008 to recommend a formal demarcation of the border running through Lake Albert. Jackson said that this was the beginning of the process and it marked the first serious effort to finalize the border.

¶3. (U) Regarding the lack of a Tripartite Agreement between the DRC, Uganda, and UNHCR for the repatriation and resettlement of refugees, Mr. Jackson said that the Ugandans were ready to go forward with the negotiations and that he expected them to begin work in January 2008.

¶4. (U) A joint committee on immigration between the two countries is supposed to meet in Kinshasa in January 2008, composed of experts from the General Directorate of Immigration in the Congolese Ministry of Internal Affairs and from the Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration Control in the Ugandan Ministry of Internal Affairs. They are to meet to collaborate on a mutual immigration policy.

¶5. (U) On the 2005 International Court of Justice USD 10 billion ruling in favor of the DRC, pursuant to Uganda's incursions into the DRC during the Congo wars, Uganda would like to meet with the GDRC to negotiate a settlement. Jackson alluded to Uganda's outstanding claims against the DRC and said they hoped to sort out the total amount by negotiation.

¶6. (U) Uganda and the DRC are to form an Oil Sharing Committee in January 2008 to update an earlier draft agreement on sharing oil resources in the Lake Albert region. The original agreement, dating back to 1990, was signed but never ratified by both countries. Uganda would like to use that agreement as a basis for a new agreement.

¶7. (U) Uganda and the DRC agreed at the JPC to full diplomatic relations with the exchange of ambassadors during the first quarter

of 2008. Jackson views this step as the beginning of normal relations. In addition, Uganda is waiting on a reply from the GDRC on a request to establish a Ugandan consulate in either Beni, North Kivu province, or Bunia, in the Ituri territory of Orientale province.

¶18. (U) At the JPC, the two countries also agreed to the establishment of a Liaison Office that will be staffed by both countries' defense ministries and be operational in January 2008. Its goal will be to monitor and put an end to cross-border insecurity activities by negative forces.

¶19. (U) The Joint Committee for Verification of Demilitarization of the disputed Rukwanzi Island in the middle of Lake Albert is supposed to meet again after January 2008 to determine needs for local security and services. The two countries had previously removed their troops and replaced them with police forces. This committee will wait for the results of the Joint Border Committee before providing recommendations.

¶10. (SBU) Comment: The movement toward full diplomatic relations between the DRC and Uganda appears to be more than just good will at the highest levels and has gained significant momentum in recent weeks. By establishing working level joint committees, the two countries are forging wider and deeper ties at several levels. Recent events suggest that the two most sensitive bilateral issues between these two countries -- demarcating a definitive border and sharing oil resources -- can be amicably resolved. If true, a corner will have been turned in ending the distrust and hostility that has characterized relations between them during the 1990's and into the 21st century. End Comment.

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